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G.A.O. Finds Nixon Gift Data Lackin

WASHINGTON, March 27 (AP) Government auditors reported today that "a number of gifts apparently received" from foreign governments by President Nixon and his family were not officially recorded, while the gift records of President Johnson were found to be in order.

The report of the General Accounting Office to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee gave no details on the unreported Nixon gifts. The committee's chairman, John J. Sparkman, Democrat of Alabama, said that in requesting an "overview" of operations under the 1966 Foreign gifts and decorations law he had not asked for "a naming of names or a witch hunt." Mr. Sparkman said that he would introduce legislation to strengthen the gift law.

The law forbids Federal employes to keep for their own use foreign gifts of more than minimal value, defined as $50. These gifts become Federal property.

Gifts worth more than $50 are to be reported, and sent on request, to the State Department Office of Protocol. The White House, however, has established its own gift unit to keep track of the largest number of gifts to Presidents.

Voluntary Compliance

Noting that the reporting system depends almost entirely on voluntary compliance, the accounting office recommended a tightening of procedures and the imposing of a maximum $1,000 fine and a year in jail for noncompliance.

The report explained that the procedures to be tightened included the processing of Presidential gifts through the White House mail room and the indexing of gifts by the White House gift unit.

"On certain occasions, gifts were given directly to members of the first family and did not come into the custody of the gift unit," it said. "However, gift unit personnel claimed they were generally able to identify and record such gifts through outgoing thank-you letters.

"We examined on a test basis the gift unit records maintained for Presidents Johnson and Nixon and their families. We found that President Johnson's records were in order but a number of gifts apparently received by President Nixon and members of the first family had not been recorded by the gift unit."

542 Gifts Reported

Not counting gifts to Presidents, the report said that from passage of the law in 1966 through last Sept. 1 only 14 Federal employes had reported a total of 542 foreign gifts to the Chief of Protocol. Only 23 gifts valued at over $50 were reported by members of Congress.

Most of President Nixon's gifts were in storage at the National Archives in Washington or at San Clemente, Calif., when the office made its review. The G.A.O. said that the National Archives was storing the Nixon gifts pending shipping instructions from Mr. Nixon. It noted that President Ford, last December, approved new procedures concerning acceptance of foreign gifts by him or his family, including reporting them periodically to the Chief of Protocol after processing by the White House gift unit.